



NPDB-HIPDB



DATA BANK NEWS



National Practitioner Data Bank—Healthcare Integrity and Protection Data Bank

JULY 2005

IQRS Users Enhance the Data Banks

The Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS) User Review Panel (URP) is a valuable forum where IQRS users discuss their ideas about Data Bank operations and provide useful input that can improve the Data Banks. Feedback received from these IQRS URP meetings has significantly enhanced the Data Banks. Recent URP improvements implemented by the Data Banks include:

- The entity's ability to obtain a summary of historical queries and reports submitted by the entity within the last four years. This historical query and report summary functionality expedites review of past report and query information (on individuals and organizations) submitted by an entity.
- The addition of a new report data field permitting entities to specify the internal reference number of the report in their files. This allows an entity to easily identify and maintain the reports they have submitted using their own internal filing system.
- The entity's ability to save practitioner data to a subject database when submitting a query or report through the IQRS. When an entity queries or reports on a subject in the subject database, the completed fields from the subject database profile are imported into the query or report form, decreasing the time needed to successfully complete the form on queries and reports.
- The ability for IQRS users to modify their settings for receiving multi-name query responses. Bundling query responses can make viewing or printing the results of large multi-name queries easier for entities.
- The entity's ability to save credit card information in the IQRS for query payment. Entities can save multiple credit card numbers and assign specific credit cards to specific users.
- Improved validation ensuring that the sequence of numbers entered for a credit card account is a valid combination. This validation will alert the submitter

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that they may have entered their account number incorrectly.

- Pre-populated certification information for IQRS users when submitting queries and reports. This saves entities time when submitting queries and reports because they no longer need to manually type the certification

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Attention ITP Users: Updated File Formats in October

On October 17, 2005, the NPDB-HIPDB will implement several improvements to the Interface Control Document (ICD) Transfer Program (ITP) submission and response file formats. The changes affecting queriers and reporters are explained in detail in the ICD(s). To prepare ITP users for the upcoming enhancements, updated ICDs are now available on the NPDB-HIPDB web site, at www.npdb-hipdb.com/itp.html. A new version of the ITP client program that supports proxy servers will also be available on October 17, 2005. ♣

European Union (EU) Seeks Information on the Data Banks

On May 18, 2004, the European Commission, the Executive body of the European Union, proposed a new directive on mutual recognition of professional qualifications, which was intended to simplify market access and to facilitate cross-border provision of services. The new directive, effective this year, points out the need for further cooperation in exchanging information regarding professional misconduct, disciplinary measures, criminal sanctions and any other serious, specific circumstances imposed on health care professionals. The directive also emphasizes protecting the confidentiality of information exchanged.

The Practitioner Data Banks Branch (PDBB) was invited to speak at the "Health Care Professionals Crossing Borders" conference held in Amsterdam, Netherlands in December 2004. The conference discussed the impact of health care professionals moving freely throughout the European Economic Area and Switzerland. The purpose of the conference was to find practical ways of exchanging information about health care professionals among member countries while taking into account existing European Union legislation and maintaining quality control of health care.

Some 160 participants represented 28 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland (not an EU country), United Kingdom, Netherlands, and the United States. The European Commission also sent representatives.

Day One: Following introductory speeches, the attendees were divided into six groups that each discussed the same three topics:

- Organizational Issues: Procedures of data exchange between competent authorities.
- Security Issues: Protection of personal data.
- Definitions: Identification and registration of data on professional misconduct.

Day Two: The attendees were divided into three groups. Each group rotated through three presentations - one each on the registration systems of the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States.

Each presentation followed the same structure consisting of four mini-presentations with a questionnaire for the participants to complete indicating the elements that could/should or could not/should not be used in a future exchanging program. The mini-presentations were:

- How is the professional registered in the system?
- What happens in the case of misconduct-registration?
- How does the exchange of information take place between national organizations and under what conditions?
- What conditions should be formulated for an international exchange of information between competent authorities with a view to a future European system?

During its presentation, the Practitioner Data Banks Branch emphasized:

- The relationship between State and Federal governments, State's rights and that the Data Banks are designed to accommodate differences in State definitions and procedures.
- That information in the Data Banks is used in conjunction with information from other sources.
- The practice of hiring trained professional credentialers who understand the data they compile on practitioners.
- The importance of on-going communication with stakeholders; compliance programs that include education; and protections for reporters and subjects of reports (a dispute system and confidentiality provisions).

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New Data Bank Correspondence Feature

To ensure that all Data Bank users and administrators read correspondence as soon as it is communicated, new Data Bank messages are now directly displayed on the *Entity (or Agent) Registration Confirmation* screen immediately upon logging in to the Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS).

This feature encourages timely reading of important Data Bank messages, such as notification of upcoming system improvements and agent designation confirmations. After the initial viewing of the Data Bank Correspondence, the message will disappear from the *Entity Registration Confirmation* screen. It will still be available for review for about 30 days on the *Administrator Options* screen (if you are the

entity's administrator) or by clicking **View Data Bank Correspondence** (if you are an entity user) on the *Entity Registration Confirmation* screen.

After 30 days from the initial posting, the IQRS automatically deletes the message from the system. Figure 1 shows how the new Data Bank Correspondence is displayed when a user logs in to the IQRS.

Although the Data Bank Correspondence feature is used infrequently, the information sent is important and should be read as soon as it is sent. Information such as confirming an agent designation and credit card expiration reminders are just a few examples of the important topics communicated through Data Bank Correspondence. ¶



Figure 1. Immediately after logging in to the IQRS, on the *Entity Registration Confirmation* screen, entity users will be able to view new correspondence.

Recent Data Bank Meetings

NPDB EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The NPDB Executive Committee met Thursday, May 12, 2005, at the Sheraton Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, VA. The Committee is composed of representatives of major NPDB constituents, including licensing board associations, professional societies, medical malpractice organizations, consumer groups, accrediting bodies, and other NPDB stakeholders. The Committee meets twice a year to provide guidance to the NPDB contractor, SRA International, Inc. (SRA).

Highlights from the meeting include:

- Status reports on NPDB operations presented by the Practitioner Data Banks Branch (PDBB) and SRA.
- A report on the AHRQ-HRSA Invitational Workshop: "Quality and Patient Safety: Whose Responsibility is it Anyway?"
- A summary of the Proactive Disclosure Service (PDS) meetings conducted at several locations throughout the U.S. to discuss possible PDS pricing options.
- A report on "Data Bank Security Enhancements."

Other agenda items included the re-election of the Committee Chair and Vice-Chair and a PDBB summary

from the European Union Invitational Conference. For more information on the Data Banks' involvement with the European Union Invitational Conference, see the "European Union (EU) Seeks Information on the Data Banks" on page 2 of this newsletter. The next NPDB Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2005, in Arlington, VA.

POLICY FORUM

A Policy Forum that focused on medical malpractice payment reporting was conducted on Thursday, June 16, 2005, in Fairfax, VA. The discussion generated by the participants was greatly appreciated. The Forum discussed the following issues:

- Malpractice payment reporting basics.
- Guidelines for reporting payments (general reporting information, high-low agreements, allocation of payments, indemnity payments, structured settlements, and payments over time).
- Existing Data Bank policies that generate frequent questions (such as legally insufficient narrative description and patient refunds).

Look for additional Data Bank meeting information in upcoming issues of *NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News*. ♣

Helpful Hints From

REVIEW YOUR BILLING HISTORY

The Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS) allows entities to obtain a historical summary of queries and reports that were submitted by the entity within the last four years. Historical query information includes information pertaining to query fees.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT DATA BANK CREDITS

The Data Banks charge a query processing fee of \$4.25 per name, per Data Bank. Requests for credit are subject to Data Banks review and approval, and should be made within 60 days from the date of the transaction (query or self-query). If you suspect that you were charged incorrectly or if you need more information about a transaction, please contact the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732. If you believe you are entitled

to a credit, you must fax your request to the **Billing Department** (703-802-4109) and include the following information:

- Your name and signature.
- The Data Bank Control Number (DCN) for the query, date of the query, and the dollar amount of the suspected error.
- A description of the error and explanation of why you believe there is an error.
- Your organization's Data Bank Identification Number (DBID).
- Your telephone number.
- A copy of your bill.

The QRXS Accepts All Reports

Introduced in January 2005 as an alternative to the Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS) and the Interface Control Document (ICD) Transfer Program (ITP), the state-of-the-art Querying and Reporting eXtensible markup language Service (QRXS) initially accepted only Adverse Action Reports. Starting on July 11, 2005, the QRXS will accept *all* report types, including Medical Malpractice Payment Reports (MMPRs) and Judgment or Conviction Reports (JOCRs). Entities will be able to query the QRXS in the future.

Both ITP and QRXS help entities interface their own data processing systems directly with the Data Banks. The QRXS provides high-volume Data Bank users with several advantages over ITP, such as:

- Adopts the industry standard XML format.
- Uses Data Banks-defined XML schema and third party XML validating software systems.
- Validates the report before the actual submission.
- Provides real-time rejection responses.
- Supports clients that use proxy servers.

For additional up-to-date information and specification documents on how to use and implement the QRXS, view the QRXS web page, located at www.npdb-hipdb.com/qrxs.html. Look for more information on QRXS querying enhancements in future issues of *NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News*. ♣

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information for each query or report submitted.

- **The entity's ability to choose to be placed on the Data Bank newsletter mailing list.** This ensures that all of the entity's users may receive a copy of the newsletter in a timely manner.
- **The entity's ability to resolve duplicate subjects in their IQRS subject database.** When an entity imports or adds subjects to their IQRS subject database, the Data Banks inform the submitter of potential duplicate subjects and offer options for the user to remove the duplicates from their database.

These improvements enhance the user friendliness of the IQRS. Look for information on future enhancements in upcoming issues of *NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News*. We value your feedback! ♣

The Data Banks

ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER (EFT) BALANCE QUESTION?

Please be aware that the Data Banks do not keep records of entity EFT account balances. To obtain account balance information, please contact your financial institution.

AVOID DUPLICATE QUERY FEES

Responses to each query are usually available electronically within 2 to 4 hours of receipt at the Data Banks. Under certain circumstances, additional processing may be required. If you do not receive a response to your query within the expected time, please do not re-submit your query on the subject in question, as this will result in duplicate transactions and duplicate fees. If you feel that you have made an error, please contact the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732.

WANT TO INSTALL THE INTERFACE CONTROL DOCUMENT TRANSFER PROGRAM (ITP)?

ITP is an alternative to the Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS) and the Querying and Reporting eXtensible markup language Service (QRXS) for those users who wish to receive machine-readable responses. The ITP interface is ideal for large-volume queriers and for reporters who wish to use their own transaction processing systems to interface with the NPDB-HIPDB. ITP is free and easy to install. It is available on-line at www.npdb-hipdb.com/itp.html. The web page describes each step in installing and executing the system. The ITP software is also available to download from the ITP web page. Note that ITP requires the Java 2 Runtime Environment (JRE) version 1.4.2 or higher, available as a free download from the Sun Microsystems Java web site.

Security Hints from the Data Banks

Identity theft and data security are real concerns for anyone who transmits or stores personal information electronically over the Internet. Protecting personal information such as your Social Security Number (SSN) is vital. The Data Banks require users to provide SSNs when conducting some transactions within the Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS), the Interface Control Document (ICD) Transfer Program (ITP), and the Querying and Reporting eXtensible markup language Service (QRXS). SSNs are required on Healthcare Integrity and Protection Data Bank (HIPDB) reports and are optional on other reports, queries, and self-queries.

Entities using the IQRS, ITP, and QRXS should know that the Data Banks operate on a secure server and use the latest technology, along with various measures to provide a secure environment for querying, reporting, and data storage and retrieval. Security features include the following:

1. Firewall protection from unauthorized access.
2. Encryption of transmitted data to prevent unauthorized use.
3. Unique passwords for data entry and retrieval.

Individuals completing a self-query application and entities performing queries and filing reports will also want to make sure they treat the subject's SSN safely and securely at their place of business.

Security professionals recommend that businesses keep their sensitive

information secure and that individuals take steps to limit the distribution of their SSN.

The following suggestions may be helpful in securing personal information:

1. Always keep personal information secured; do not leave personal data on desktops and printers.
2. If an unfamiliar screen pops up on your computer while you are submitting information to the Data Banks, contact the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 to verify the request before entering any sensitive information. The Data Banks will request an SSN only during the completion of a self-query, report, or query submission. Please note that the Data Banks will request credit card information on only the following screens: *EFT Authorization*, *Select Payment Method*, *Add Credit Card*, *Edit Credit Card*, and *Delete Credit Card* screens.
3. Individuals should not carry their Social Security card in their wallet or purse because, if lost or stolen, their SSN could be compromised.
4. Driver's licenses should not display an individual's SSN (unless it is a State requirement).
5. Businesses should not display complete SSNs on financial statements or checks that move through the mail.
6. Individuals should not use their SSN as a password or PIN for any service. ❖

NPDB Deadlines for Submitting Reports

Entities are responsible for meeting specific reporting requirements and must register to submit reports. You may have recently received a letter reminding you to submit reports according to the time requirements. However, if you did not receive the letter, the following information is provided as a reminder.

- Medical Malpractice payers must submit reports within 30 calendar days of the date a payment was made.
- State licensure boards must submit reports within 30 calendar days of the date the adverse licensure action became a formal, final action.
- Hospitals, other health care entities, and professional societies must submit reports within 15 calendar days of the date of an adverse action.

As prompted by the IQRS, malpractice insurers, hospitals, health care entities, and professional societies must also print a copy of each report submitted to the NPDB and mail it to the appropriate State licensure board for its use. ❖

Dear Data Banks...

This column answers questions you may have about Data Bank policy and procedures. If you have a question about how the Data Banks work, please write to Dear Data Banks at P.O. Box 10832, Chantilly, VA 20153-0832 or e-mail your question to Dear Data Banks at npdb-hipdb@sra.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Question: I would like to have a copy of the Basis for Action codes to help me determine the most appropriate code for a report that I am preparing to submit. Where can I find the list of codes?

Answer: The Basis for Action codes are provided in the drop-down lists on the IQRS *Report Input* screen. These codes are also found on the NPDB-HIPDB web site, located under the General Information heading in the Data Field Codes section, where you may select the appropriate code list.

Question: How do I determine if I am eligible to register as an "other health care entity?"

Answer: Each entity is responsible for determining if they have the authority to query and/or report to the NPDB and must certify that eligibility to the NPDB in writing. Entities that are unclear about whether they qualify may want to consult with their legal advisor to make the final determination of their eligibility.

The following information, which is also found in Eligible Entities chapter of the NPDB Guidebook, available for viewing and printing at www.npdb-hipdb.com/npdbguidebook.html, may be helpful in determining eligibility.

"Other Health care entities" include managed care organizations and other organizations that provide health care services and follow a formal peer review process to further quality health care.

"Provide health care services" applies to the delivery of health care services through any of a broad array of coverage arrangements or other relationships with practitioners, whether they employ the practitioners directly or through contractual or other arrangements. This definition specifically excludes locum tenens and other staffing organizations as well as indemnity insurers that have no contractual

or other arrangements with physicians, dentists, or other health care practitioners. Examples of eligible entities may include Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs), Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs), group practices, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, hospices, renal dialysis centers, and free-standing ambulatory care and surgical service centers.

In addition to HMOs and PPOs, other managed care organizations may qualify as health care entities if they provide health care services and follow a formal peer review process to satisfy the eligibility requirements of Title IV of Public Law 99-660, the *Health Care Quality Improvement Act of 1986*, as amended, and in the regulations codified at 45 CFR Part 60.

Question: How do I determine if my entity is eligible to query the NPDB?

Answer: The *Health Care Quality Improvement Act of 1986* defines which entities are eligible to query the NPDB. The statute specifies that State licensing boards, hospitals, health care entities, and professional societies that provide health care services and follow a formal peer review process to further quality care are eligible to query the NPDB. You should review the statutory definition to determine whether your entity meets these requirements. Please see the Eligible Entities chapter of the NPDB Guidebook for more information. The Guidebook is available at www.npdb-hipdb.com/npdbguidebook.html.

Be aware that NPDB reports are confidential. If you are not legally authorized to query and receive information from the NPDB, it is a violation of the confidentiality provisions to do so. The Office of Inspector General, HHS has been delegated the authority to impose civil monetary penalties on those who violate the confidentiality provisions up to \$11,000 for each violation.

If you have an urgent question, please call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732. Information Specialists are available to speak with you weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (5:30 p.m. on Fridays) Eastern Time. The Customer Service Center is closed on all Federal holidays. ♣

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The Data Banks were regarded as a clear and simple system in which ongoing monitoring is important. As a result of the conference, a small informal European network of health care regulators is attempting to define the appropriate information and methods of exchange of information and to clarify confidentiality issues.

The process of developing arrangements for European-wide transfer of fitness-to-practice regulatory information will continue as the United Kingdom assumes the European Union Presidency in July 2005. The objective is to establish a sound basis for information exchange and to take into account emerging good international practice to ensure patient safety. This would include establishing appropriate ongoing links internationally and with the World Health Organization. ¶

On the Horizon

FALL POLICY FORUM AND NAMSS CONFERENCE

The Data Banks will conduct a Policy Forum for Data Bank queriers in Phoenix, AZ, on September 18, 2005. This forum will cover issues that relate to reporting and querying for both the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) and the Healthcare Integrity and Protection Data Bank (HIPDB) as well as other topics that generate frequent user questions. Please look for Policy Forum highlights in the upcoming October issue of *NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News*.

The National Association Medical Staff Services (NAMSS) Annual Conference will take place from September 19 – 21, 2005, in Phoenix, AZ; where the Data Banks will be hosting an exhibit booth. ¶

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